

## **INTRODUCTION**

1. As we have this time together in God's Word, I would like to invite you to turn with me in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians chapter 3.
2. In our study last week, we looked at verses 1-4 in what I titled "The Carnal Christian."
3. We will be continuing that thought as the Apostle Paul continues this subject through verse 9.
4. Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.
5. Carnality is an absolute.
6. You either are carnal right now or you're spiritual right now, meaning you're filled with the Spirit.
7. You're one or the other at any given time.

8. And the Corinthians were acting carnal.
9. So much so, that Paul said he could not speak to them as spiritual “but as men of flesh, as to infants in Christ” (v.1).
10. They had divided themselves to such a point that there was no unity in the fellowship.
11. There was only “jealousy and strife” (v.3).
12. You ask “What were they doing?”
13. Verse 4 gives the answer:
14. They were saying, “I am of Paul,” and another “I am of Apollos.”
15. Chapter 1, verse 12 adds two more names: Cephas and Christ.
16. This, of course, was dividing the church into groups.

17. It forced them to not agree or have the same mind or same judgment.
18. Paul's response in chapters 1 and 2 was to call them to unity.
19. He also reminded them of what he said when he first came to them.
20. He said in chapter 2, verse 2: "For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."
21. He did not come "in cleverness of speech" (1:17) or "superiority of speech or of wisdom" (2:1) but in the demonstration of the power of God.
22. And now in chapter 3, verses 1-9, he tells them what is really behind all of this.
23. They were being carnal, fleshly, "infants in Christ" (3:1) and acting like "mere men" (3:3-4).

24. This was not humility.
25. This was pride.
26. This was selfishness.
27. This was the flesh at work.
28. And instead of growing in Christ, they were yielding to the flesh.
29. Ministers are God's workers (3:9).
30. They are not celebrities!
31. Of course, you wouldn't know that in many churches today.
32. And if you turn on the TV, you wouldn't find it there either.
33. No! Their attitude was nothing more but sinful!

34. They elevated men.
35. Who should they have elevated? God!
36. He is the one who is to get the glory not men.
37. Paul told the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:20 to “glorify God in their bodies.”
38. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:12 (NASB) Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.
39. Even when suffering, Peter said in 1 Peter 4:16 to “glorify God.”

So...

## **LESSON**

### **I. We Are to Glorify God Not Men (vv.5-6)**

## A. Apollos and Paul were Servants Not Celebrities (v.5a)

Paul says, “What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants...”

Paul is not using the usual word for servants (doulos) “but simply meant a menial worker of any sort, free or slave. It was often used of a table waiter or what we would now call a busboy.

Paul was saying in effect, “No one builds a movement around a waiter or busboy, or erects monuments to them.

Apollos and I are just waiters or busboys whom the Lord used as servants to bring you food.

You do not please us by trying to honor us. Your honor, your glory, is misplaced.

You are acting like the world, like **mere men**.

Build your monuments, give your praise to the One who prepared the spiritual food we delivered.”<sup>1</sup>

John Calvin said, “No man ought to be gloried in, for faith allows of no glorying except in Christ alone. Hence those that extol men above measure, strip them of their true dignity. For the grand distinction of them all is, that they are ministers of faith, or, in other words, that they gain disciples to Christ, not to themselves.”<sup>2</sup>

Paul said in his second letter to them in 2 Corinthians 4:5-12 (NASB) For we do not preach ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. 7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of

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<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, John F., Jr. [1 Corinthians](#). Chicago: Moody Press, 1984. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary.

<sup>2</sup> Calvin, John. [1 Corinthians](#). electronic ed. Albany, OR: Ages Software, 1998. Print. Calvin’s Commentaries.

God and not from ourselves; 8 we are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; 9 persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; 10 always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. 11 For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. 12 So death works in us, but life in you.

Paul, Apollos and all pastors, teachers, and believers are...

“Servants” (diakonos), where we get the word deacon. It is also translated “minister” (Latin for servant). It occurs that way in the KJV.

1. They were instruments “through whom you believed”

Romans 10:14 (NASB) How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed?

How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?

Ironside says “Imagine a household divided over servants!”<sup>3</sup>

2. God is the one who “gave to each one” salvation

It is the Lord alone who...give[s] the faith to the spiritually ignorant and dead. Salvation is God’s work of grace to whom He chooses to give it.<sup>4</sup>

Man is “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph.2:1) but “God made you alive” (v.5).

We are “His workmanship” (v.10)

## B. Each Servant (Minister) Has a Part in the Gospel

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<sup>3</sup> MacDonald, William. [Believer's Bible Commentary: Old and New Testaments](#). Ed. Arthur Farstad. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1995. Print.

<sup>4</sup> MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. [The MacArthur Study Bible](#). electronic ed. Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997. Print.

1. Some “plant” (v.6a) (Paul planted)
2. Some “water” (v.6b) (Apollos watered)

To plant, to water—these activities belong together. One is as necessary as the other.

Lenski says, “One must know the Orient in order to understand how vital for constant growth watering is in areas where no rain falls during the entire summer.

The planting done at Corinth was not intended to produce a quick, transient crop that is grown in the damp winter season; it was rather like the planting of trees and of vines that need the water courses (Ps. 1:3) the year 'round.

So in Paul's imagery planting and watering are complementary.

Each man did what the circumstances made

necessary and natural.”<sup>5</sup>

3. God was “causing the growth” (v.6c)

“Causing the growth” (auxano),  
imperf.act.ind.

The imperfect refers to an action in process or a state of being that is occurring in the past with no assessment of the action’s completion.

a) Philippians 1:6 (NASB) For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

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<sup>5</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians\*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.

- b) 1 Corinthians 1:30-31 says, “But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, ‘Let him who boast, boast in the LORD.’”
  
- c) If you back up to the beginning of chapter 1, Paul says in verse 2 that this was “the church of God” at Corinth.

It’s not the church of Paul or Apollos or Peter.

In verse 3, Paul says that “Grace and peace” was from God and Jesus.

We are who we are because of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit!

Paul continues his analogy from agriculture by saying essentially...

## II. Ministers Are Not Anything Only God is the One to Be Glorified (vv.7-9)

Paul understood this so clearly that he said in Romans 15:18-19 (NASB) For I will not presume to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me, resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed, 19 in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Spirit; so that from Jerusalem and round about as far as Illyricum I have fully preached the gospel of Christ.

So Paul says in verse 7...

A. It's Not the One Who Plants that is Anything (v.7a)

B. It's Not the One Who Waters that is Anything (v.7a)

This is the only correct conclusion. Men are nothing, and God is not only something (τι) but,

as the contrast implies, He is everything.<sup>6</sup>

C. It is God Who is Responsible for the Growth  
(v.7b)

1. Two times Paul says “God was causing the growth” (vv.6, 7).
2. Psalm 62:11 says that “power belongs to God.”
3. It is God who draws the sinner and grants faith and repentance (John 6:44, 65; 2 Tim.2:24; Eph.2:8-9).

Paul continues by saying...

D. Those Who Plant and Those Who Water Are  
One But Each Will Receive His Own Reward  
According to His Own Labor (v.8)

This is why John said in 2 John 1:8 (NASB)  
Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we

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<sup>6</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. [\*The Interpretation of St. Paul's First and Second Epistle to the Corinthians\*](#). Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1963. Print.

have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward.

E. Ministers Are God's Fellow Workers (v.9a)

1. In Romans 16:3, Paul mentions "Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers."
2. In Philippians 4:3, Paul mentions "Clement...my fellow worker."
3. In Colossians 4:10-11, Paul mentions "Aristarchus, Barnabas, Mark, Jesus who is called Justus; these are the only fellow workers for the kingdom of God who are from the circumcision, and they have proved to be an encouragement to me."
4. In Philemon 1:24, Paul mentions "Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow workers."

F. Churches or Believers Are God's Field, God's Building (v.9b) (see verse 16)

## CONCLUSION

1. When you consider Paul's argument against the Corinthians, you have to ask yourself, "Have I elevated others as if they're the source of my salvation?"
2. We all have a part in the kingdom of God.
3. Some plant, some water but it's God is causing the growth.
4. Is He causing the growth in here this morning.
5. Someone planted the gospel in your life.
6. Someone else came along and watered that seed.
7. Is God drawing your heart to Him today?
8. If so, He is "causing the growth."
9. He is regenerating you.

10. He is making you alive.

11. Now you can repent and believe in Jesus!

12. Rejoice in His salvation!